

As of midnight on August 31, 2005

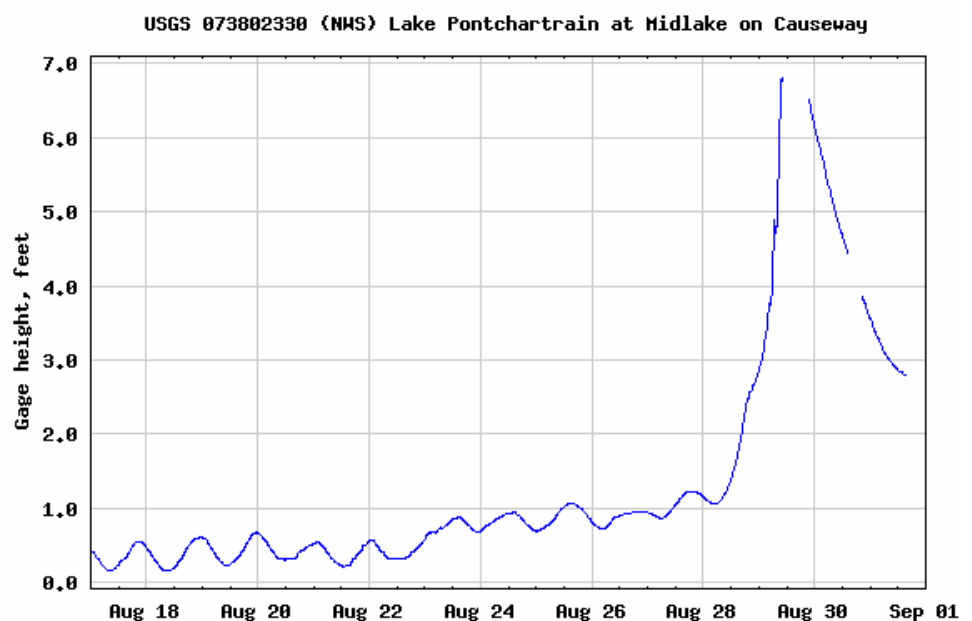
The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers progresses in hurricane recovery efforts

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is aggressively battling the aftereffects of Hurricane Katrina on the New Orleans District's 350 miles of hurricane protection levees. Built to withstand hurricane Category 3 storms, Katrina exceeded the design of the authorized hurricane protection system that resulted in several breaches.

The Corps released two contracts today to close the breach in the 17th Street Canal. The 3,000 pound sandbag operation at the 17th Street Canal was postponed earlier today when U.S. Army Chinooks were diverted for rescue missions. The Corps continues to coordinate with Army officials to have helicopters assist in placement of sandbags at the breaches.

Water is now flowing slowly out of New Orleans because water is seeking its own level -- that of Lake Pontchartrain. Lake water is draining from Lake Pontchartrain out the Rigolettes, Chef Mentour and Seabrook passes. The rate of fall is slowing down as the head differential across the passes diminishes, and Lake Pontchartrain is almost back to normal levels. Unfortunately, the levee gaps aren't allowing the water to flow back out of the city very quickly. Gaps will still need to be closed and the water pumped from flooded areas.

Lake Pontchartrain's normal water level is 0.5 above sea level with about a six-inch tide fluctuation. The latest reading, taken at 3 p.m. today, the lake was at 2.79. At 1:30 p.m., the lake level read at 2.84 feet above sea level.



Corps officials are working together with Orleans Parish and Louisiana Department of Transportation officials and a private contractor to close the mouth of the 17th Street Canal at the lakefront to prevent further flow. The Corps contracted for Boh Brothers Construction Company, headquartered in New Orleans, to place piling at the lakefront to stop flow in the 17th Street Canal. This will stabilize the water flow and allow work on the levee, while also helping to stabilize the rest of the levee system.

Along with local and state officials, the Corps is contracting to build access roads to the breach sites and to fill in the breaches. Rock/stone/crushed concrete will be hauled by truck for road construction and to repair the breaches. One plan calls for building an access road from Hammond Highway to the 17th Street breach, and then southward to the end of the breach. The road would have to be built to safely permit backing and dumping of heavy materials.

This same road access plan may be used to gain access to the London Avenue levee breach. The London Avenue Canal currently has flow into Lake Pontchartrain. There are no details regarding the flow rate at the present time.

Corps reconnaissance teams have also identified another area near the Mirabeau Avenue Bridge on the London Avenue Canal that may fail and are monitoring the situation.

Earlier today, the Corps delivered two 5,000 cubic feet per second pumps to the Louisiana Superdome, and deployed 15 boats to assist in search and rescue.

The Motor Vessel Lafourche is surveying the Mississippi River from the New Orleans District Headquarters to the mouth of the Mississippi River. A private business, Kirby Marine, volunteered its services and sent the Kirby Responder to survey the Gulf Intra-coastal Waterway from Pascagoula, MS, to the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO). Tomorrow this vessel is scheduled to survey the MRGO and the Baptist Colette area. The Corps' Motor Vessel Boyer deployed to Houma to survey the Houma Navigation Canal. Another Corps vessel, the Dustpan Jadwin, deployed to the Port Allen Lock and should arrive there tonight. This vessel will continue transit to Venice, LA, and be used as a staging platform for survey boats in the area.

Communications continues to be a staggering obstacle, delaying timely information on the status of the breaches from personnel that are in the field. Hand-held radios and repeaters are being expedited to Corps employees in the New Orleans area.

Additional information

Much of the levee breach information is based on aerial photos and visual observations.

- The breach at the 17th Street Canal Levee, a levee-floodwall combination, is about 300-feet long. It's believed that the force of the water overtopped the floodwall and scoured the structure from behind and then moved the levee wall horizontally about 20 feet, opening both ends to flow.
- At the Industrial Canal floodwall breach, we suspect two breaches; one 100-foot breach is closer to the lakeside and another 500-foot breach. Fortunately, water is receding through the breach and when it equalizes, the Corps will begin breach-closing operations.
- At the London Street floodwall, it's estimated that there's a 300-foot breach.
- The Corps is still investigating the site near the Mirabeau Avenue Bridge on the London Avenue Canal that may fail.